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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DUSHANBE 001623

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SUBJECT: TAJIKISTAN: SDPT CHAIRMAN RETURNS FROM MEDICAL TREATMENT IN MOSCOW AND MEETINGS WITH RUSSIAN OFFICIALS

CLASSIFIED BY: THUSHEK, CHARGE D'AFFAIRES, STATE, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Social Democratic Party of Tajikistan's (SDPT) Chairman, Rahmatullo Zoyirov met with PolOff August 28 after returning from treatment in Moscow and Switzerland following his stroke. Zoyirov appeared healthy and reinvigorated, and discussed the upcoming presidential election as well as conversations in Moscow with Tajik labor migrants and Russian authorities on their role in the election. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Rahmatullo Zoyirov, Chairman of the SDPT, spent three weeks in Switzerland and Moscow seeking treatment after temporarily losing his speech and some movement in his body from a micro-stroke in July. Zoyirov told Embassy sources that while he was in Moscow, doctors tested his blood and found a high level of toxins, indicating that he was poisoned. However, doctors refuse to issue statements supporting the evidence. Zoyirov strongly suspects the government poisoned him in order to eliminate political opposition. He now says that he is healthy and has regained full speaking skills and control of motor movements. Doctors say he may have suffered some brain injuries as a result of the stroke and he still cannot see clearly. He said he was thankful for the opportunity to check his health, the first time in twenty years. During Zoyirov's meeting with PolOff he appeared in fine health and spoke with his usual assuredness and energy.

TAJIK POLITICS IN RUSSIA

13. (C) While in Moscow, Zoyirov met with Russian government officials. Although he declined to name them, he did say they are very close to Putin. According to Zoyirov, he only initiated one meeting and was invited by officials to other

meetings. He was not entirely forthcoming with the nature or content of his discussions, but observed Russia may be "shopping around" for political leaders in Tajikistan to support besides Rahmonov. Officials made it clear to Zoyirov that he was not "their type of candidate." (COMMENT: This leads one to believe that Zoyirov may have gone to Moscow to ask for political support. END COMMENT.) He mentioned that Russia was courting several people in the government who are "two-faced" and eager to take over power from Rahmonov, including Prime Minister Oqil Oqilov. Zoyirov expressed concern about Tajikistan's stability after the election and fears an assassination may occur or some other tumultuous event such as a steep economic decline.

¶4. (C) Zoyirov also met with Tajik immigrants in Moscow to rally their support for him. However, he was unable to get any assurances of support from the migrants he met. Tajik labor migrants number anywhere from 600,000 to one million. Although their numbers are large, few plan to vote in the presidential election. The Tajik embassy in Moscow will set up polling stations in key cities throughout Russia. However, since most migrants are unregistered, many will not go to vote out of fear of being detained by Russian authorities. During past elections, Tajik embassy personnel have been ordered to go out to the street and collect votes from migrants in order to meet a certain quota set by Dushanbe.

BACK TO THE DUSHANBE GRIND

¶5. (C) Zoyirov planned to meet with Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) Chairman Muhiddin Kabiri to discuss the IRPT's plan for the election. He suggested that if Kabiri wins his party's nomination to run against Rahmonov, the party may split because some factions may strongly support other

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candidates and refuse to support Kabiri. He said that in order for the IRPT to remain united, it may have to refrain from nominating any candidate.

¶6. (C) Regarding his own party's participation in the election, Zoyirov stated that he will run in the election if Rahmonov does not run, or the SDPT will boycott the election if Rahmonov runs. (COMMENT: Of course Rahmonov will run! We will see what Zoyirov decides. END COMMENT.) The SDPT has always maintained that Rahmonov's presidency is constitutionally illegal and will make it their campaign platform to educate Tajik citizens about this perceived injustice. They plan to closely monitor the election and point out violations during the process. Zoyirov said he was ready to be back in Dushanbe and to start working, but strongly doubted Tajikistan would change for the better after the election.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: As one of the most preeminent lawyers in Tajikistan, Zoyirov has always enjoyed great credibility. His meetings with Russian authorities likely did occur, however, it is uncertain at what level Zoyirov would have access. Russian authorities may be misleading Zoyirov in an attempt to rile his opposition fervor. Zoyirov may have initiated a meeting with Kabiri in an attempt to gain IRPT support for his own agenda. END COMMENT.
HUSHEK